Applying for Your Student Visa/Residence Permit: Germany

What is a visa?
A visa is official authorization allowing you to enter a country and travel, work, live, or study there for a specific period of time. Generally, a visa is an elaborate stamp that is sealed onto one of the pages of your passport. Visas are issued to American citizens by a foreign country's Embassy or Consulate located in the United States. Every country has its own regulations governing the issuance of visas.

Do I need a visa to go to Germany?
All persons who wish to study in Germany for a period longer than 90 days must apply for a study visa/residence permit. US citizens can enter Germany and apply for their study visa after they arrive in the country.

How do I obtain a visa/residence permit?
Citizens of the United States may apply for their residence permit after arrival in Germany. You will then need to register with the Foreigners’ Registration Authority (Auslaenderbehoerde). US citizens also have the option of obtaining the visa in the United States prior to departure. If you decide to apply for the visa prior to leaving for Germany, contact the consulate that serves the state of which you are a resident in order to find out the procedures and requirements. Requirements for the visas vary from consulate to consulate.

What do I need to apply for a visa/residence permit?
► Attention: requirements change constantly! Verify this information with the Consulate General Office that has jurisdiction over the state of your permanent address, as the application process can change or may even vary by consulate:
http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/05__Legal/01__Consulate__Finder/__Consulate__Finder.html.

To obtain a residence permit, submit the following documents to the Foreigners’ Registration Authority once you arrive in Germany. Then you will receive your permit (Aufenthaltsgenehmigung) and your residents' registration certificate (Meldebescheinigung). Please take care of these documents as you will need them occasionally, e.g. when opening a bank account or applying for a library card.

- A valid passport that will be valid at least 3 months beyond your stay in Germany and contains at least two blank pages, along with two copies of the photo page.
  o Refer to page 1 of your Study Abroad Handbook on how to apply for a passport.
- Two fully completed residence permit application and declaration forms. These documents can be obtained online at: http://www.germany.info/contentblob/2053590/Daten/1913/Visa_Form_Long_Term_PDF.pdf
- Original letter of acceptance to your host institution and two copies.
- Evidence of sufficient financial funds to support yourself while in Germany, and two copies of each document. This could be a notarized copy of a bank statement, or a letter or statement from your parents or a sponsor which expresses their wish to fund your study.
- Proof of residency in the consular district where you plan to apply in the form of your driver’s license or utility bill in your name. (only applicable if you are applying for a visa before entering Germany)

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- Visa fee of US$92 (add US$25 if you are applying for a visa before entering Germany to have them mail your passport back to you).

The German Embassy/Consulates
If you wish to be issued a visa before leaving the US, consult this website to find the US German Consulates that are authorized to issue visas:

http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/05__Legal/01__Consulate__Finder/__Consulate__Finder.html